INCOMING TELEGRAM Department of State ACTION COPY

SECRET

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PP RUEHC
DE RUMJIR 28218/1 1671050
ZNY SSSSS
P 161015Z JUN 67
FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY
STATE GRNC
BT
S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 SAIGON 28218

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1967 JUN 16 AM 8 20

EXDIS

SUBJECT: THIEU-KY ELECTIONS

REFERNCE: STATE 210584 AND 210835

1. DEPT WILL HAVE SEEN MY REPORTS OF SEPARATE CONVERSATIONS JUNE 14 WITH KY AND THIEU (SAIGON 28090 AND 28170) AND IS AWARE OF THIEU'S ANNOUNCEMENT MADE SAME DAY IN HUE AND SAIGON (SAIGON 28094).

2. SOME ADDITIONAL RIGIDITY OF POSITIONS AND TENSION HAVE BEEN INJECTED INTO THE MILITARY SIDE OF THE PICTURE BY THIEU'S PUBLIC DECLARATION, ALTHOUGH THE CIVILIAN CANDIADATES ARE CLEARLY

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PLEASED BY THIS DEVELOPMENT. I HAVE ONCE AGAIN URGED BOTH KY AND THIEU TO COME TOGETHER PROMPTLY AND ATTEMPT TO WORK OUT AN AMICABLE UNDERSTANDING, BUT I AM NOT OPTIMISTIC THAT THIS WILL BE DONE, OR THAT IF THE MEETING COMES ABOUT, MUCH PROGRESS WILL BE MADE. AS I HAVE REPORTED, KY IS DETERMINED TO RUN AND TO WIN, AND AS OF NOW HE APPEARS PREPARED TO USE WHATEVER MEANS ARE NEEDED FOR THIS PURPOSE UNLESS WE BRING OUR INFLUENCE TO BEAR DIRECTLY AND FORCEFULLY ON HIM REGARDING SOME OF THE PRESSURE MOVES HE HAS ALREADY INITIATED TO ASSURE HIS ELECTION. I HAVE IMPRESSED UPON HIM THAT SOME OF THE METHODS HE HAS BEEN USING CAN DAMAGE HIS OWN IMAGE TO SUCH AN EXTENT THAT IT MAY AFFECT BOTH HIS CHANCES OF ELECTION AND IF ELECTED HIS ABILITY TO GOVERN.

SECRET

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY Ivan Izenberg DATE 10/5/81
RDS ☐ or XDS ☐ EXT. DATE
TS AUTH. REASON(S)
ENDORSE EXISTING MARKINGS ☐
DECLASSIFIED ☑ RELEASABLE ☑
RELEASE IN PART ☐
PA or FOI EXEMPTIONS

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3. THIEU'S CANDIDACY HAS MADE KY'S TASK MUCH MORE DIFFICULT BY ASSURING SOME REDUCTION OF ARMY VOTES AND SUPPORT FOR HIM. THIS WAS UNDOUBTEDLY ONE OF THIEU'S CHIEF OBJECTIVES ANOTHER PERHAPS BEING TO LAY THE GROUNDWORK FOR COMBINING FORCES WITH A CIVILIAN TICKET, FOR EXAMPLE, AS PRIME MINISTER TO HUONG IF THIS COULD BE AGREED. RUNNING ON HIS OWN THIEU WILL WEAKEN KY'S

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SUPPORT. IN COMBINATION WITH HUONG HE WOULD IN ADDITION IMPROVE THE LATTER'S PROSPECTS. WE HAVE HEARD THA SUPPORTERS OF HUONG AND THIEU HAVE TALKED BUT WE HAVE NO CONFIRMATION THAT THEY HAVE REACHED ANY SORT OF UNDERSTANDING.

4. WE DO NOT SEE HOW DUAL MILITARY CANDIDACIES OR THIEU'S ULTIMATE JOINING WITH A CIVILIAN TICKET CAN FAIL TO HAVE SOME DIVISIVE EFFECT ON MILITARY ESPECIALLY ON REGIONAL GROUNDS. KY WILL FEEL GREATER URGENCY TO DEMONSTRATE THAT HE IS A WINNER AND TO DEVELOP A BAND-WAGON ATMOSPHERE IN ORDER TO ATTRACT BOTH MILITARY AND CIVILIAN SUPPORT. HE HAS ALREADY BEEN RESOURCEFUL IN DOING THIS AND, BY MOVING RAPIDLY AND EFFECTIVELY, HE HAS UNDERCUT ANY INTENTION BY THIEU TO DO THE SAME. THIEU PROBABLY NOW SEES HIS CANDIDATURE AS A LAST CHANCE TO SABOTAGE KY'S EFFORTS AND ALSO AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO JOIN A WINNING COMBINATION AGAINST KY. ALL OF THESE FACTORS MAKE INCREASED MILITARY INVOLVEMENT IN POLITICAL MANEUVERING PROBABLE AND, IF NOT CHECKED, THE RESULT COULD BE TO IMPEDE THE VIETNAMESE MILITARY EFFORT AT A CRITICAL JUNCTURE. WHILE I THINK IT WILL BE DIFFICULT TO STERILIZE THE MILITARY FROM THIS POLITICAL PROCESS,

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AS GENERAL CAO VAN VIEN HAS ANNOUNCED, I BELIEVE A GENUINE FURTHER EFFORT IN THIS DIRECTION SHOULD NEVERTHELESS BE MADE. I AM NOW TRYING TO ARRANGE A SMALL LUNCHEON WITH THIEU, KY AND VIEN TO BRING THEM TOGETHER IN INTIMATE AND INFORMAL SURROUNDINGS TO DISCUSS THIS PROBLEM. I WOULD HOPE AS A MINIMUM TO SECURE THEIR AGREEMENT TO A PUBLIC STATEMENT SUBSCRIBED TO BY ALL THREE REAFFIRMING VIEN'S EARLIER ANNOUNCEMENT AND CONTAINING SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS TO THE ARMED FORCES TO REFRAIN FROM FURTHER INVOLVEMENT. I WOULD ALSO HOPE TO GET AN AGREEMENT THAT THE STATEMENT WOULD BE CIRCULATED TO OFFICERS AND RANKS AND THAT SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS WOULD BE ISSUED TO CORPS AND

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DIVISION COMMANDERS PLACING RESPONSIBILITY ON THEM TO SEE THAT THE INSTRUCTIONS ARE CARRIED OUT. THIS SHOULD HELP THE SITUATION BUT THE PROBLEM WILL REMAIN AND WILL REQUIRE CONSTANT VIGILANCE AND PROODDING TO SEE THAT SOME EFFECT IS GIVEN TO THE INSTRUCTIONS.

5. I DO NOT BELIEVE THAT WE CAN BRING ABOUT THIEU'S WITHDRAWAL BY DIRECT PRESSURE ON HIM WITHOUT RUNNING THE UNACCEPTABLE RISK OF FAILING AND OF GIVING THIEU A MAJOR WEAPON TO USE AGAINST US AND AGAINST KY, WHO WOULD THEN BE THE "AMERICAN CANDIDATE." OUR CHIEF ROLE IN THE CONSTITUTIONAL PROCESS SHOULD BE TO ASSURE

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THAT IT PROCEEDS ON A REASONABLY FAIR AND EQUITABLE BASIS AND THAT THE RESULT BROADENS THE POPULAR BASE OF THE VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT AND INCREASES NATIONAL UNITY FOR PROSECUTION OF THE WAR AND NEGOTIATION OF THE PEACE. A SECONDARY, BUT IMPORTANT, OBJECTIVE IS TO BRING INTO OFFICE AS QUALIFIED AND EFFECTIVE A TEAM OF LEADERS AS POSSIBLE FOR THESE SAME PURPOSES. FUNDAMENTAL TO THE PRIMARY OBJECTIVE, OF COURSE, IS A FAIR ELECTION, AND KY'S CURRENT ACTIONS ARE VERY RAPIDLY DESTROYING THIS POSSIBILITY. ALL POLITICAL ELEMENTS ARE FULLY AWARE OF WHAT IS GOING ON AND HAVE CONCLUDED THAT KY IS GETTING AWAY WITH IT BECAUSE THE AMERICANS SUPPORT HIM AND CONDONE HIS METHODS. EVEN IF WE THINK KY IS THE MOST EFFICIENT AND ENERGETIC LEADER ON THE SCENE, AND THIS IS NOT ENTIRELY CERTAIN, HIS ELECTION AS A RESULT OF CLEARLY REPRESSIVE MEASURES WOULD IN THE LONG RUN DESTROY HIS EFFECTIVENESS AND SOW THE SEEDS OF DISUNION AND DISSIDENCE. THE CHIEF ONES TO BENEFIT IN THE END FROM THIS PROCESS WOULD BE THE VIETCONG AND HANOI.

6. TO DEMONSTRATE THAT WE STAND FOR A FAIR ELECTION AHEAD OF SUPPORT FOR ANY ONE INDIVIDUAL, I AM CONVINCED THAT WE MUST

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FORCE KY TO MAKE CERTAIN MEASURES TO COUNTERACT THE DAMAGE THAT HAS ALREADY BEEN DONE. ONE POSSIBILITY WOULD BE PROMPT EXPORTATION OF GENERAL LOAN, PERHAPS ON INVITATION TO AN EXTENDED TRAINING VISIT AND PROGRAM IN THE U.S. THIS WOULD BE SYMBOLIC

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AND POSSIBLY EASIEST FOR KY TO ACCEPT ONCE HE IS CONVINCED THAT WE WILL NOT TOLERATE THE COURSE HE IS FOLLOWING AND THAT WE ARE PREPARED TO ENGAGE HIM PUBLICLY ON THIS SCORE. A QUITE REMOVAL OF LOAN FROM THE SCENE WOULD BE UNDERSTOOD BY ALL AND MIGHT NOT INVOLVE TOO DIRECT LOSS OF FACE BY KY HIMSELF, ESPECIALLY IF HE PERSONALLY INSTRUCTS LOAN TO ABSENT HIMSELF, AS HE APPARENTLY DID ON THE EARLIER TRIP TO WASHINGTON.
BUNKER

NOTE: ADVANCE DELIVERY TO S/S-O 6/16/67 8:26 A.M.
PASSED WHITE HOUSE 6/16/67 8:45 A.M.

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INCOMING TELEGRAM Department of State

ACTION COPY

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Info

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DE RUMJIR 28218/2 1671105
ZNY SSSSS
P 161015Z JUN 67
FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY
STATE GRNC
BT
S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 SAIGON 28218

1967 JUN 16 AM 7 58

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EXDIS

SUBJECT: THIEU-KY ELECTIONS

REFERENCE: STATE 210584 AND 210835

7. ONCE THIS MOVE HAS BEEN TAKEN AND IF WE CAN GET KY TO INITIATE OTHER QUIET MEASURES TO CONTROL CENSORSHIP AND TO ASSURE EQUAL FACILITIES FOR ALL CANDIDATES, THERE MIGHT THEN BE A BASIS FOR SEEING HOW WE COULD ENCOURAGE THE LEADING CANDIDATES TO PREPARE THE GROUND FOR WORKING TOGETHER IN A GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL UNION WHATEVER THE ELECTION OUTCOME MAY BE. (I HAVE

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REPORTED THAT KY CLAIMS TO BE WORKING IN THIS DIRECTION WITH HUONG AND IF ELECTED WOULD PLAN TO TAKE OTHER CIVILIAN ELEMENTS INTO HIS GOVERNMENT. THIEU SEEMS TO BE WORKING ALONG THE SAME LINES.) THIS WILL OBVIOUSLY BE A DELICATE AND DIFFICULT UNDERTAKING, BUT I WOULD HOPE THAT ONCE THE ELECTION IS PUBLICLY CLEANSED, WE WOULD BE IN A POSITION TO WORK QUIETLY WITH THE PRINCIPAL CANDIDATES AND THEIR SUPPORTERS TO IMPRESS UPON THEM THE ABSOLUTE NECESSITY FROM THEIR VIEWPOINT AND OUR OWN OF BRINGING ABOUT SUCH A COALITION SO LONG AS THE WAR CONTINUES. ESSENTIAL INGREDIENTS IN THIS PRVESS WOULD BE EMPLOYMENT OF THE TALENTS OF THE MOST HIGHLY QUALIFIED INDIVIDUALS TO FILL KEY GOVERNMENT POSTS, A FULL AND RESPONSIBLE ROLE AND AUTHORITY FOR THE ARMED FORCES IN THE GOVERNMENT, AND AN UNDERSTANDING WITH THE NEW LEGISLATIVE LEADERS THAT THE WAR EFFORT MUST TAKE PRECEDENCE OVER LESS URGENT OBJECTIVES UNTIL AN ACCEPTABLE PEACE HAS BEEN ATTAINED. ONLY THROUGH SOME SUCH BROAD UNDERSTANDING AND COOPERATION AMONG THE KEY POLITICAL ELEMENTS -- MILITARY, CIVILIAN, REGIONAL, RELIGIOUS, AND MINORITIES -- CAN WE HOPE TO OVERCOME THE DIVISIVE EFFECTS WHICH ARE NOW EVIDENT AND WHICH ARE ALREADY UNDERMINING THE POLITICAL PROCESS.

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8. I WOULD ALSO HOPE THAT IT MIGHT BE POSSIBLE TO GET ALL THE CANDIDATES TO STATE PUBLICLY THAT THEY WOULD ABIDE BY THE VERDICT OF THE ELECTORATE AND WOULD SUPPORT WHATEVER GOVERNMENT EMERGED AS THE RESULT OF FAIR AND FREE ELECTIONS.
BUNKER

ADVANCE COPY TO S/S-O 6/16/67, 8:02 A.M.
PASSED WHITE HOUSE 6/16/67, 8:30 A.M.

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